

This amendment is simple: it cuts \$124.8 million from the overall bill.

For all my colleagues who say they are committed to deficit reduction, this is your chance to prove it.

This amendment reduces government spending while protecting the Pentagon's national security mission by reducing the funding for military bands to the authorized level.

Currently, this bill and the Pentagon's budget includes a total of \$324.8 million for 154 military bands and more than 5,000 full-time, professional military musicians.

This amendment would reduce total funding for military bands to \$200 million – the limit set for spending on military bands included by voice vote in the 2012 Defense Authorization bill – H.R. 1540.

Let me be clear: This amendment brings the Defense Appropriations bill in line with the limit for spending on military bands established in the Defense Authorization.

Again, this House is already on record voting to limit spending on military bands to \$200 million.

Earlier in debate on this bill, Representative Carter of Texas had an amendment that struck language I inserted in the Defense Appropriations bill to limit spending on military bands to \$200 million.

That amendment was agreed to on voice vote.

I do not believe a majority of Republicans and Democrats in this House want to be on record adding ... adding over \$124 million in spending for military bands.

This amendment gives all my colleagues the opportunity to reduce the cost of government by cutting \$124 million from this bill while allowing the Pentagon to continue to spend \$200 million for choirs, Jazz bands, ensembles, and other musical missions.

There is no doubt that military bands are important. We all enjoy listening to military bands and cherish the traditions of military music.

But in a time of fiscal crisis, \$200 million must be enough for ceremonial music, concerts, choir performance, and Country music jam sessions.

My colleague Mr. Carter believes spending \$325 million in FY2012 is vital to our national security – a national priority that can not be cut or even reduced.

I could not disagree more.

Are there really Members of this House who can in good conscience vote to cut nutrition programs for poor, hungry women and infants, but vote to protect a bloated military bands budget?

Is this House really capable of gutting investments in women's health care, but allow a \$5 million increase in funding for military bands?

Republicans are forcing cuts to law enforcement, firefighters, and homeless veterans, but they take a stand opposing limiting funding for military bands to \$200 million as a national security priority?!

Is this Congress really going to raise the debt ceiling so it can pay \$325 million for military bands next year with money borrowed from China?

These truly are misplaced priorities!

Mr. Chairman, as this Congress faces record deficits it is time for both smart investments and tough choices.

In this \$650 billion defense appropriations bill, this amendment proposes a extremely modest test of this House's willingness to cut spending for a non-essential military function.

Last year, the Army Material Command had a \$4.4 million state of the art building specially constructed for the Army Material Command Band.

While schools, health centers, and food banks are getting cut this \$4.4 million example seems to indicate that no one told the Pentagon there is a fiscal crisis.

The Pentagon doesn't need any more band aid.

Mr. Carter argued against reducing spending on military bands by saying the language didn't save one cent – he was correct. This amendment saves U.S. taxpayers \$124.8 million.

And that makes a lot of sense to the Minnesotans I represent.

And it should make a lot of sense to my Tea Party Republican colleagues who march to their own drummers.

This amendment gives all of my colleagues – Republicans and Democrats – a chance to show our constituents deficit reduction.

I urge my colleagues to support this reduction to unnecessary defense spending.